

# Hey, hey, we're the Flunkies!

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

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Keanu Reeves wasn't always an unconvincing, cardboard cut-out, dumbo of an actor you'd struggle to really connect with. Before he hit the big time as young LAPD officer Jack Traven

in Speed, and selfless saviour of humanity Neo in The Matrix, he was the supremely awesome dude, Ted 'Theodore' Logan, starring alongside his equally bodacious buddy, Bill S. Preston, Esquire. Together they were 'Bill and Ted' and in 1989 an 'Excellent Adventure' ensued. It's all documented; there's a factually accurate, totally radical movie available based on their experiences, the script for which was written in just four days flipping back and forth between local coffee shops!



Capstone Software must have approved too because in 1991 they commissioned Off The Wall Productions to develop an Amiga game, not so much as to coincide, but shall we say recreate it for the small screen, in places using digitised stills for that authentic SoCal high school aesthetic. A year earlier a DOS version was released by the same developer, while alongside the Amiga issue, IntraCorp, Inc. took care of the Commodore 64 adaptation. All three games are based on the same design and mechanics. Only the visuals really differ, and it's all downhill from Amigaville.

It's a graphic adventure game of sorts controlled with the joystick that sets out to ape the plot in its entirety, even going so far as to cut and paste passages of dialogue, or sample snippets of audio directly from the movie to immerse you in the most triumphant action.



We learn from time-travelling hipster, Rufus (played by comedian George Carlin), as he takes five to return from Futuristic City circa 2688, that the very foundations of a far-flung humanity-to-be were built on the runaway success of the 'Wyld Stallyns' heavy metal band; an outfit Bill and Ted are presently struggling to get off the ground owing to a lack of musical talent of all Achilles' heels.



In 2013 Alex Winter who played Bill revealed via Reddit that originally the movie's producers "were going after serious people first. Like Sean Connery" for the role of Rufus. What he *doesn't* explain is why in the Amiga game he morphs into a black gangster rapper!





Much like the most entertaining X-Factor contestants, according to Bill and Ted it's not their lack of talent that's causing their stagnation. Like, what-ever dude. Was that more Miley Cyrus? I *am* trying, honest. I'm just not 10 years old anymore.



Bill: Ted, while I agree that, in time, our band will be most triumphant. The truth is, Wyld Stallyns will never be a super band until we have Eddie Van Halen on guitar.

Ted: Yes, Bill. But, I do not believe we will get Eddie Van Halen until we have a triumphant video.

Bill: Ted, it's pointless to have a triumphant video before we even have decent instruments.

Ted: Well, how can we have decent instruments when we don't really even know how to play?

Bill: That is why we NEED Eddie Van Halen!

Ted: And THAT is why we need a triumphant video.

Bill/Ted: EXCELLENT! (air guitar, the clock chimes 8:00 am)

Bill: Uh oh, we're late!

Ted: For what?

Bill: For school, dude!

Ted: Oh yeah.

Not only are they incompetent musicians, they're also high school flunkies, which unfortunately for them - and civilisation as a whole - is pivotal to Life, the Universe and Everything. In the event of failing his final history presentation, Ted's dad - police captain John Logan - intends to consign him to an Alaskan military school, scuppering the band's chances of ever getting their act together... and it's not just an idle threat either; he's a proper hard ass. In the sequel he like, totally arrests time-travelling dictator, Charles 'Chuck' De Nomolos.

Would *you* want to live in a world without the Wyld Stallyns? What kind of life would that be? There would be no sun in my sky. There would be no love in my life. Please tell me baby how would I go on?



"Mr. Ryan: It seems to me that the only thing you have learned is that Caesar was a salad dressing dude. Bill, Ted, this is really quite simple. You have flunked every section of this class. Now unless you get an A+ on your final oral report tomorrow, guys, I have no choice but to flunk the both of you. Now you know your topics so I would at least suggest that you cover those areas. (motions to a paper that Bill is holding) Do you understand?"



Fret not for Rufus has a cunning plan. No, no, not one like that. This one may actually work. Traveling back to San Dimas, California, the year prior to the juncture we join the plot in a phone booth time machine (later given away by Nintendo Power Magazine to promote the NES game) he explains to the dimwitted duo how the device can be used to investigate the critical moments (and people) in history that furnished the bedrock of modern society. Sounds like the ideal way to research the topic at hand don't you think? Who better to demonstrate how they laid the groundwork for present-day San Dimas than the luminaries themselves?





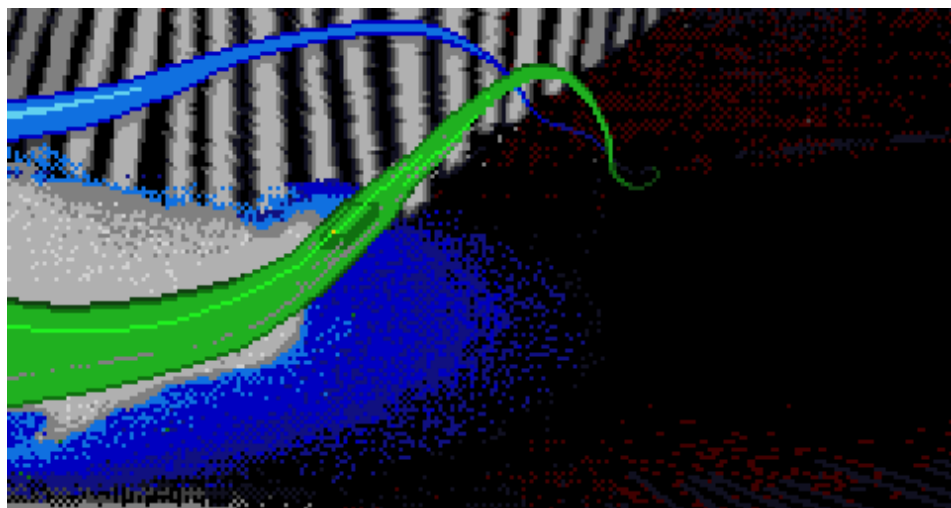
Rufus didn't factor in yonking these 'historical heavies' into current-past-modern times (you get my gist), yet as it happens that turns out pretty well, the people they encounter never being quite sure if they are dealing with escaped mental patients or exceptionally talented impersonators. Somehow no holes are ripped in the space-time continuum or parallel universes created so all's well that ends well.

Much like in the movie you're required to travel back in time in your TARDISmobile collecting key figures from world

history and depositing them at the mall. Where the game deviates is that you can only take two at once, serving to artificially prolong what is already a woefully short journey for a £25 investment. Perhaps it's a blessing that it can be finished in fifteen minutes flat because any longer and you'd be like, majorly bored anyway, you know?

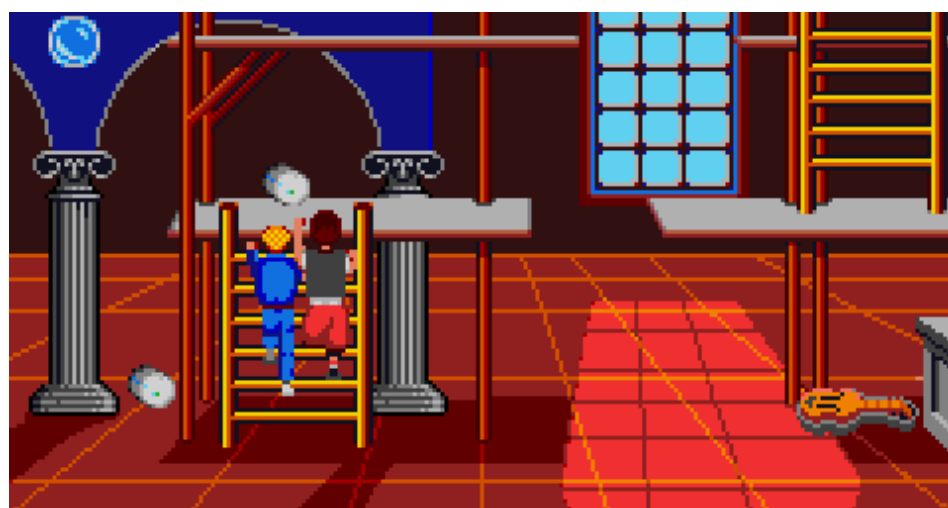


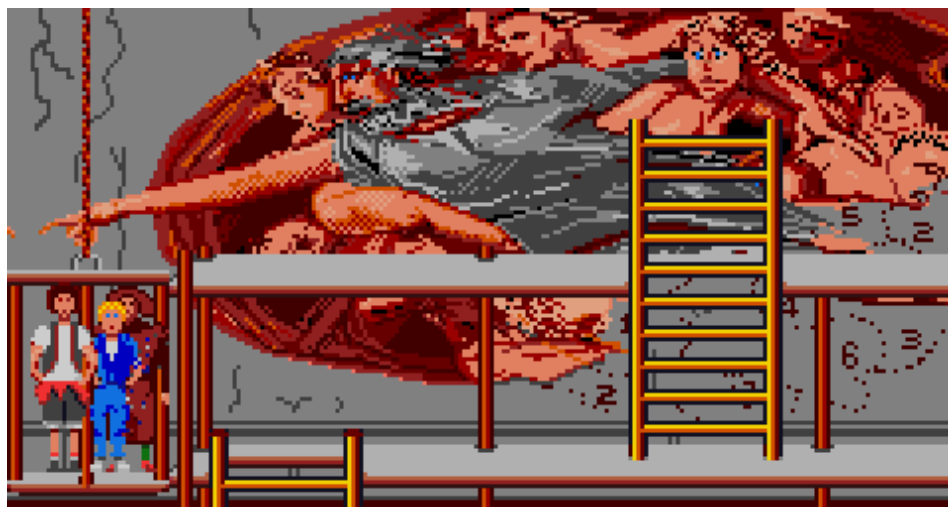
Don't expect Monkey Island degrees of sophistication here dudes (and dudettes). There are four difficulty settings on offer that vary the number of characters you must lure to your telephone booth (6 or 12) and deliver via the wonders of intergalactic time-travelling space pipes - or circuits of history if you prefer - though interaction and dialogue is almost non-existent.



Effectively the gameplay boils down to a gopher quest ('go for this' and 'go for that', old joke, never mind) interspersed with a couple of arcadey mini games; a top-down maze where you're required to find the exit without bumping into the armed guards, and a simplified version of Donkey Kong, which appears to have been inspired by a poster found on Ted's bedroom wall. Michelangelo (with a duff back) - who doesn't appear in the movie at all - is your prize for reaching the apex of the latter stage if you can manage to dodge the

rolling cans and paint droplets long enough to experience such heady heights.





You wander around a salmagundi of recognisable environments of historical significance welded together in unison. Despite the partnership, 'Excellent Adventure' is purely a single player game, both characters being controlled simultaneously by the same input device. It makes sense given they're inseparable in the movie and it's funny for five seconds to watch them jump over obstacles in complete synchrony. Beyond that you begin to wonder if laziness on the programmer's part had more of a bearing on this decision than authenticity. The (ahem) 'action' unfolds by way of flick-screen scrolling that often results in you stumbling into unforeseen peril, sprung upon you without warning at the edge of the next screen. Most heinous!





Each famous blast from the past can be found in their relevant setting and tempted into your phone booth using an appropriate object sourced from various locations dependent on the chosen difficulty level. At one time the duo's means of travel was intended to be a 1969 Chevrolet as a sort of Back to the Future spoof, though was later switched with a phone box, presumably because that had never been done before (ha-de-ha-ha). This being a teen movie, at least one '69' reference had to remain.

(Bill and Ted meet themselves)

Ted: OK wait. If you guys are really us, what number are we thinking of?

Bill/Ted: 69, dudes.

Bill/Ted: Whoa.

(quadruple air guitar solo)

Collectable objects can be stored in an inventory much like a traditional point and click adventure game so there's no obligation to use them right away. Some of this bait logically correlates with your prey by way of an in-joke, while some appear to be entirely random. How funny the jokes are, well, you be the judge. Some characters don't need any encouragement to join your crusade at all so the challenge - if you can call it that - is merely to hunt them down and loiter about in their vicinity until they stick to you like glue.

Whenever you solve a 'puzzle' you'll be rewarded with an electric guitar riff and an "excellent" audio sample. Goof up on the other hand and you'll be informed - again by way of a digitised audio sample - how "bogus" the situation is.

You'll find Sigmund "tell me about your mother" Freud kicking back in Vienna on his chaise long undergoing psychoanalysis conducted by 'Frau Mom' (well having a rolling pin and crockery hurled at him anyway). She can easily be distracted - and therefore *him* abducted - by a humble bunch of flowers grown from a seed in a pot outside the mall. Siggy seems to have been rather divided on the topic of flowers. On the one hand, he is known to have said, "Flowers are restful to look at. They have neither emotions nor conflicts", and was very fond of the ones in his own garden. On the other, he thought flowers appearing in dreams represented female genitalia, an emotionally charged subject if ever there was one for a psychological paradigm so extrinsically linked with repressed sexuality.



(Ted lies on a gurney. Freud is analysing him.)

Freud: Therefore, Ted's father's own fear of failure has caused him to make his son the embodiment of his own deepest anxieties about himself. And, hence, his aggression transference onto Ted. (Ted sits up.)

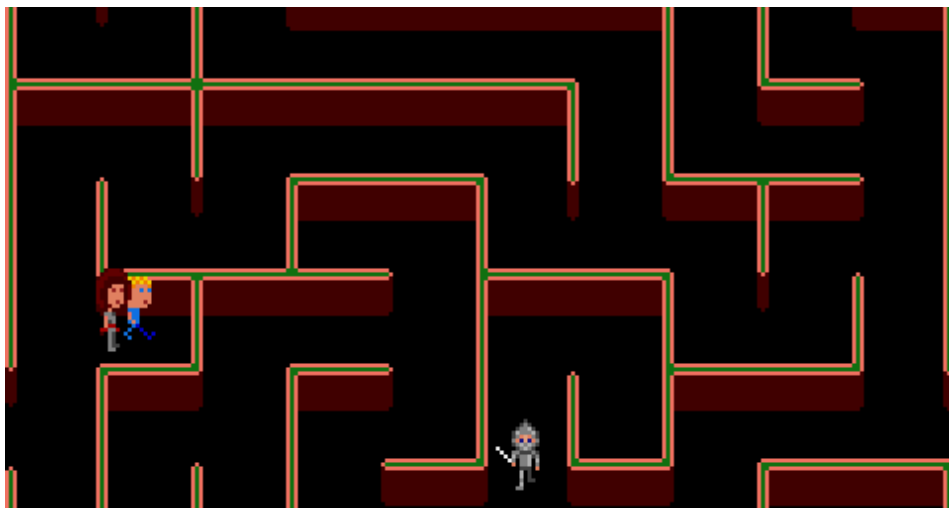
Ted: Whoa! (Freud lays him back down.)

Freud: Okay, Ted?

Ted: Yes, thank you very much Sigmund Freud. (Freud motions for Bill to lie on the gurney.)

Bill: Nah! I just got a minor Oedipal complex. (Missy looks at Mr. Ryan and shrugs.)

Queen Marie Antoinette - who only gets a brief mention in the movie in another student's presentation - must be rescued from the Bastille Saint-Antoine state prison by locating her cell at the end of a maze, the gag being that she was convicted of treason and sentenced to death, hence the guillotine outside.



Exiting the jail you'll spot an 'eat cake' sign: at one time she supposedly said "let them eat cake" on discovering that her subjects had no bread with which to sustain themselves. The sentiment was intended to reflect that she was so pompous and out of touch she hadn't realised they were too poor to be able to afford the ingredients to bake the delicacy (brioche specifically) reserved for the privileged upper classes. It's a mis-attribution, yet it stuck. In any case she doesn't take any more persuasion to be pried away from her incarceration, even *without* a collectable gimmick.



In the midst of a high-stakes (*probably* - I'm trying to make this sound dramatic) poker game in the Mad Dog Saloon, Billy the Kid is accused of cheating by three gruff, slack-jawed gunslingers. If you can intervene in the inevitable brawl, saving his skin, he'll gratefully follow you wherever you go.







Squaring up to the nefarious posse one by one, your bare knuckles and underdeveloped wits your only allies, inconceivably is the way forward. Picture Mortal Kombat scaled down for the Atari 2600 with the combatants forming a polite and orderly queue to attack you, and you won't be disappointed.

Not quite what happens in the movie. Artistic license, you know the drill...

(They are each picked up and thrown down the bar, where they crash through the walls. The wall happens to lead to the saloon girls dressing room. They wave at the boys. Billy helps them get their heads out of the wall. They turn around and three men are approaching them.)

Ted: Look! (points) It's the Goodyear Blimp. (The men turn to look, and our guys jump them and shove their hands down on their heads. One of the guys' guns goes off and it hits him in the foot. Our guys run out of the bar.)

Bill: I can't believe they fell for that! (They quickly run over to the booth. Bill opens the phone book and looks for a number.)

Men in the bar: Let's get 'em!!

(At The Booth) (Bill is dialling.)

Billy: You guys saved my life.

Ted: Nothing doing Billy the Kid.

Billy: Where we going?

Ted: The Golden Age of Civilisation.



Napoleon - the "short, dead dude" - is up for a day out, no questions asked so snatch him quick before he changes his mind. You'd have thought 'Ziggy Pig' ice cream would be the numero uno dish to win him over? Someone dropped the (cannon) ball there! In the movie the snooty military leader gets down with the kids purely by accident.

(French Base Camp) (Napoleon looks at the booth through a telescope.)

Bill and Ted: How's it going dude?

Napoleon: (in French) Blow them up! Move it! (He takes a step but an incoming cannonball explodes near him and he's thrown into the Circuits of Time behind the booth.)

Remember to grab the shovel before leaving Monsieur Bonaparte's Austrian battlefield - you'll need that later to dig up the fire extinguisher from the desert. This is used to rescue Joan of Arc who was burnt at the stake in 1431 at the age of 19 on charges of witchcraft and heresy. On the silver screen she's so in awe of you materialising out of thin air she sees it as some kind of divine intervention and thus gets on board without quibbling over the minor details.



All it takes to bribe Honest Abe Lincoln away from his quarters is a single piddling penny acquired from the saloon barkeeper. Oh, the irony. The Lincoln Penny initially forged in 1909 was the first American currency to bear a president's likeness so it's relevant here for two reasons.



Without his fiddle, Caesar can be spotted in Rome attempting to play a tune on his lips instead. He'll happily follow you if you donate a violin to his cause; clearly a reference to the well-worn phrase, "Nero fiddled while Rome burned", meaning to concern yourself with trivial matters while the world goes belly up, or feel free to insert your own less diplomatic phrase. It's thought to emanate from the Great Fire of AD 64, though the violin hadn't been invented at the time, and Nero was in fact 35 miles away at his Antium villa when the Romans began to get a bit hot under the collar, so take the whole thing with a pinch of salt.



Answer Socrates question correctly by climbing a mountain, hoovering up coins as you go along ("Pssst... no-one is wiser than Socrates!!") and he'll agree to leave ancient Greece and accompany you to your shindig without further ado... and no doubt be eternally grateful if you'd refrain from calling him 'So-cratz' in your best Cali surf bum drawl! (I'm not sure how Freud feels about being referred to as 'Frood'. He didn't mention it to me).







(Bill and Ted are in Ancient Greece)

Bill: (approaching Socrates) How's it going? I'm Bill, this is Ted. We're from the future.

Socrates: Socrates.

Ted: (whispering to Bill) Now what?

Bill: I dunno. Philosophize with him!

Ted: (clears his throat, to Socrates) "All we are is dust in the wind," dude. (Socrates gives them a blank stare)

Bill: (scoops up a pile of dust from the basin before them and lets it run out of his hand) Dust. (he blows the remainder away)

Bill: Wind.

Ted: (points at Socrates) Dude. (Socrates gasps)



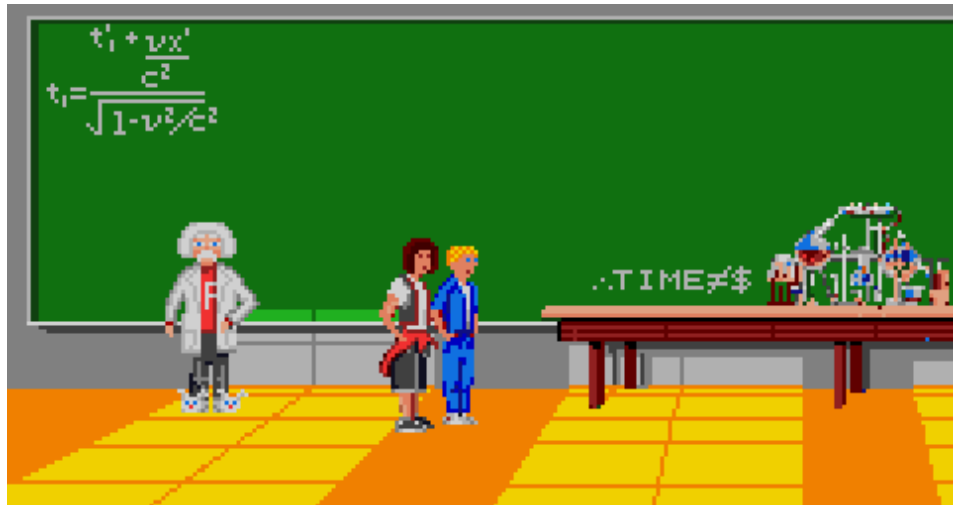
Beethoven - who is somehow an Elvis fan - is yours for the night in exchange for a musical note you will already have sourced from the caveman in exchange for some butane. Cheap date! Signing him up is almost as easy in the movie...



(Austria) (Beethoven is playing the piano for a gathering of people. The booth arrives in an outer room. Bill and Ted walk in and lift Beethoven up, piano chair and all, and haul him out of the room. The booth takes off again.)

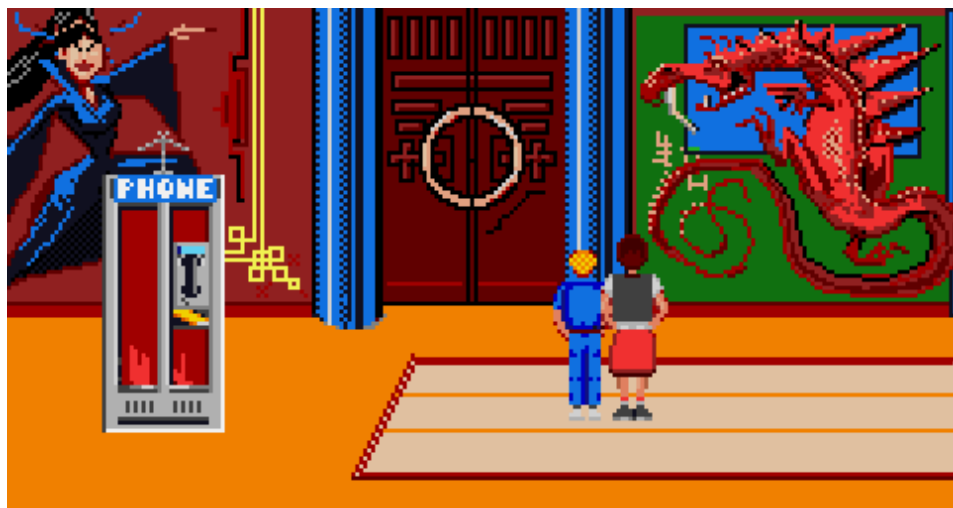
Equally predictable, Einstein (who doesn't feature in the movie) can be bought with an ice age calculator dug out with an ice pick, whilst Genghis Khan, amongst other more carnal delights (cue seed-spreading jokes) has an insatiable penchant for Twinkie bars "because of the excellent sugar rush". *That*, you'll find stashed in the bread-bin.



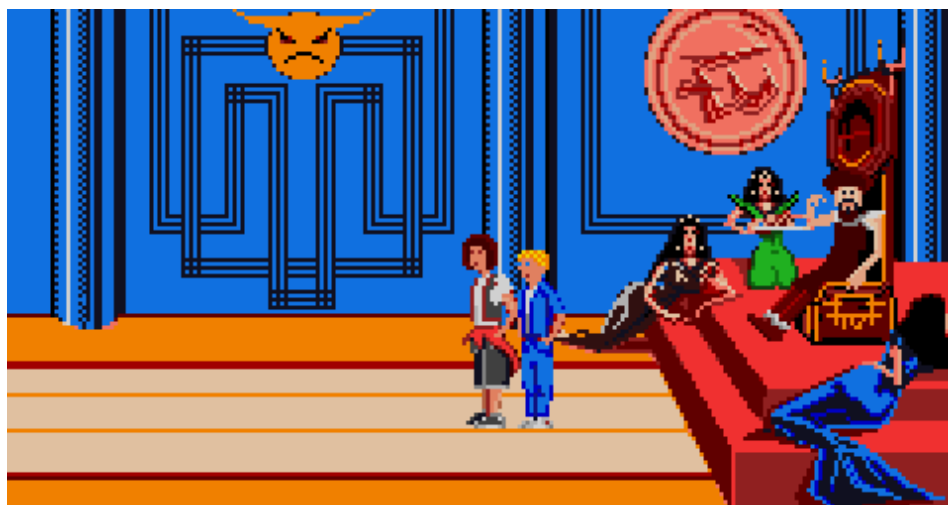


(Mongolia) (Genghis Khan is eating his dinner. A slave girl comes in and begins to feed him. He stops and spits out the food, then grabs her and proceeds to begin to ravish her. Suddenly with a flash of light the booth arrives. Ted holds out a Twinkie. Genghis grabs his club and goes after the Twinkie.)

Ted: Would you like a Twinkie, Genghis Khan? Say please.  
Mmmmm. (He enters the booth and it takes off again.)







Upon rounding up the final "personage of historical significance" you get to parade them in front of an audience to earn an A+ for your history report. They don't actually *say* or *do* anything, they just stand there like shop dummies, so you may as well have hired an assortment of clothes horses instead. At least in the movie they put on a bit of a show and earn their keep.



Right before stating your case for Aplusdom you have the option to call Missie, Bill's 'super hot stepmom' who

immediately shows up for a mall drive-by, giving you the opportunity to ogle her.



It serves no purpose whatsoever, then neither do the royal family, or politicians. Hey, it's a free world, right? Top marks for encapsulating the out-there flippancy of the source material. Ted and Bill (glances over shoulder for signs of cosmic order meltdown) would most assuredly dig the vibe.



Fail to gather enough stooges in the allotted time frame - if that's even possible given what a pushover the micro pilgrimage is - and Bill ends up flipping burgers at a fast-food joint, while Ted is packed off to the Alaskan military academy... where his first question would likely be is there an in-joke I'm missing here?



In terms of critical appraisal at the time of release, it's as though the main players in Amigaland were chained together by the God of Reviewage, who refused to release them until they reached a consensus verdict within one percentage point. They all thought it was equally fleeting, extortionate and childish.

"Bill and Ted could have been 'triumphant', as the movie has scope for a radical adventure game, but this is little more than a frantic scavenger hunt. The presentation is excellent, with a little telephone directory included in the box. This is no substitute, though, for the shallow and unchallenging gameplay. The puzzles are obvious and repetitive. For very young players, Bill and Ted is perfect, but for older dudes: it's bogus!"

#### **58% - Amiga Format (August 1991)**

"The whole thing is just too undemanding and unspectacular to merit the asking price. It would be ideal for the younger players, but older dudes really needn't bother - it just isn't excellent enough to really cut it."

#### **58% - Amiga Power (July 1991)**



"Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure is fatally let down by a lack of depth both in the overall game design and on each level. It took me just seven minutes to complete level one the first time I played it, and level four ('the most difficult') doesn't require much practice to get right either. My advice is to spend a quid on renting the video first, then if you think it's the 'most excellent' comedy you've seen recently, and don't mind spending £24.99 on a game that only takes an hour or two to finish, I can recommend this most 'bodacious' piece of software."

### **57% - CU Amiga (August 1991)**

It's taken writing a historical dissertation on Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure to bring me to the stark realisation that this is a game tailored towards the aptitude of three-year-olds, based on a movie aimed at ten-year-olds. Surely there must be some kind of mentoring service out there to squash this sort of madness long before we reach the trite 'thought for the day' wrap up bit at the end? Anyone?

(tumble-weeds roll by a deserted frontier town)



Something else you can't help noticing if you write the title of this movie enough times (and happen to be a grammar Nazi) is that it actually revolves around *Ted's* Excellent Adventure and also involves Bill as if he's an afterthought. Right on! Apostrophe jokes! It *must* be late.



(end it, end it now!)

These scene descriptions have taken a turn to the dark side all of a sudden haven't they? No need to be nasty!

I think I'll need to call in reinforcements for this one. Take it away Uncle Abe...

(Later) Ted: And now, for our last speaker. One of the greatest presidents in American History, Mr. Abraham Lincoln. (Audience claps as Lincoln steps forward.)

Lincoln: Fore score and seven minutes ago, we, your forefathers were brought forth upon a most excellent adventure. Conceived by our new friends, Bill and Ted. These two great gentlemen are dedicated to a proposition which was true in my time, just as it's true today. Be excellent to each other, and (pause) party on dudes! (Again the audience goes crazy!)

Bill: No...

Ted: ...Way!

Bill & Ted: Thank you San Dimas High!

(All of them climb back into the booth...smoke rises up from the floor and obscures the booth as it takes off. When the smoke clears and the booth is gone the audience continues to clap.)

All: We want more! We want more! (Lighters are lit all over the room.)





Well if you insist. There *is* the Lynx and Game Boy version...  
(Off! Get out! Out! OUT!!!)